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AUTHOR Theel, Ronald K., Ed.
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ABSTRACT

The Syracuse City School District recognizes that infusing the curriculum with multicultural education is essential to equal educational outcomes. The following recommendations for the elementary level are made: (1) every curriculum area should be taught with a multicultural perspective; (2) field trips should be organized to expose students to culturally diverse experiences; (3) assemblies should be organized around multicultural themes; (4) multicultural classroom materials should be designed focusing on cognitive and affective domains; (5) cooperative learning should be used; (6) literature should represent multicultural perspectives and experiences; and (7) self-directed free play and structured games should be encouraged. The following recommendations for the middle schools are made: (1) multicultural education should be integrated into the total school program through an interdisciplinary approach; (2) curricular focuses should include the development of critical thinking skills; (3) multicultural classroom materials should be designed focusing on cognitive and affective domains; (4) materials, activities, and experiences should be varied; (5) cooperative learning groups and peer tutoring should be used; (6) a home-based guidance program should provide positive role models; (7) a mentor program should use community members with culturally diverse backgrounds; and (8) teaching strategies should reflect the learning styles of students from diverse cultures. Statistical data in four graphs are appended. (FMW)

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PLANNING FOR MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION AT THE ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL LEVELS

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Ronald K. Theel, Editor
Delaware Academy
900 South Geddes Street
Syracuse, New York 13204
(315) 435-4540

This article was written by the following members of the 1989-90 Superintendent's Issues Analysis Team, Syracuse City School District:

Margaret Foody
Iverna Minor
Jill Stewart
Ronald K. Theel
Randy Williams
Maxine Williams
Ernest C. Wood

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Introduction

In the Syracuse City School District, the Superintendent's Issues Analysis Teams serves as a valuable in-district resource for collecting, analyzing and presenting the data necessary for sound decision-making. The team is comprised of six aspiring administrators who are appointed for a one-year term by Dr. Henry F. Williams, Superintendent of Schools. Selection criteria for team members include:

- willingness to serve in a voluntary capacity;
- interest in becoming an educational administrator;
- plans for obtaining administrative certification;
- ability to do highly professional research;
- ability to respect the legitimate needs of the superintendent of schools for confidentiality; and
- demonstrated potential for educational administration.

Team members conduct research on a variety of topics in response to district needs as expressed by Dr. Williams. One such concern identified by the Superintendent during the 1989090 school year relates to disaggregated data on student achievement. Is there a disparity in academic performance among students of different racial and ethnic backgrounds? If so, what strategies can be utilized to address the inequities? These crucial questions provided the impetus for the team's charge as expressed in the following mission statement:

> *To review research and resources in order to design a delivery system to infuse multicultural education at both the elementary and middle level educational programs.*

The research process utilized by the team to implement this charge consisted of:

- a literature review;
- data base searches;
- contacts with numerous school districts including Atlanta, Georgia, and Portland, Oregon;
- discussions with various state education department officials, and
- interviews with leading experts including educators at local colleges and universities.

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Based upon this research, the team arrived at the following functional definition of multicultural education:

> *The development of an educational environment in which people of different races, sex, cultural heritage, national origin, religion, political, economic, and social backgrounds will develop an awareness, knowledge, and respect for cultural diversity to ensure equal educational outcomes.*

Analysis of Disaggregated Data

The team subsequently examined Syracuse City School District disaggregated data on student achievement at both elementary and middle school levels. A review of such data would reveal whether proportionate numbers of students from various racial and ethnic groups are succeeding in the areas of reading and mathematics.

An analysis of Iowa test scores in mathematics revealed that the percentage of black students in need of remediation was more than double the percentage of white students. The percentage of Hispanic students in the low range of performance was found to be the highest of the three groups. A disparity in performance at the upper ranges was also noted (see Attachment A).

A similar profile emerged from an analysis of the Iowa reading scores. While equal percentages of black and white students scored within the average range of performance, the percentage of black students in need of remediation was found to be nearly twice that of white students. The upper range of scores contained a percentage of white students almost three times greater than that of black students. Fully half of the Hispanic students scored in the low range (see Attachment B).

District-Wide Recommendations

Once the need for multicultural education in Syracuse had been clearly defined, the team then began developing a plan to address the concerns. The team's research findings indicate that multicultural education is relevant to all racial, ethnic, cultural and regional groups and is designed to foster mutual respect, understanding and harmony between all segments of society. Designing a program which promotes these attitudes means a change in the total school environment. Recommendations for infusing multicultural education into the Syracuse City School District are as follows:

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- The development of a policy by the Board of Education which describes the District's perspective on infusing multicultural education into the school system;
- The development of a mission statement for the District, which is based on multicultural perspective;
- The appointment of an administrator to coordinate all multicultural activities within the District;
- The establishment of a task force to plan the specific implementation of multicultural education within the school system. These implementation strategies would focus on the general areas of curriculum revision, staff development, minority recruitment, and parental/community involvement;
- The addition of multicultural components to preservice and inservice staff developmental offerings; and
- The inclusion of multicultural criteria within each building's school improvement plan will enable the total school staff to be involved.

Elementary Level Recommendations

Specific recommendations at the elementary level were developed. Children in the United States are growing up in a racially and culturally diverse country. Every person in the nation has roots in a cultural group through which one inherits language, lifestyle, and traditions. Multicultural education is designed to foster mutual respect, understanding, and harmony between all segments of society. Since multicultural education involves a change of attitudes, it is especially relevant to young children. Attitudes are formed at a very early age, so it is important that the concept of multiculturalism be introduced at the initial states of a child's education. Therefore, the program at the elementary school level should be developed with this goal in mind.

Multiculturalism should be integrated throughout the elementary curriculum. By doing this, students can develop awareness, knowledge and respect for culturally diverse groups. The following strategies are recommended for the elementary instructional program as related to goals of multicultural education:

- Every curriculum area should be taught with a multicultural perspective. This includes not only the regular classroom program, but also the special areas, such as music, art, and physical education.
- Field trips should be organized to expose students to culturally diverse experiences.
- Assemblies should be organized around multicultural themes to increase students' background knowledge about culturally different people.

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- In the classroom, multicultural materials, activities, and experiences should be designed focusing on cognitive and affective domains.

- Cooperative learning should be used to help students learn to accept and interact with culturally different individuals.

- Children's literature, representing multicultural perspectives and experiences, should be widely used at the elementary level. This literature encourages children to engage their imagination in concern for others, so it provides an ideal forum for the exploration of issues.

- Self-directed free play as well as more structured games which focus on multicultural diversity should be encouraged because physical activity is one of the most natural and effective ways for children to learn about themselves and the world around them.

Middle School Recommendations

Multicultural education also has great relevance for middle level education. During the middle school years, the teacher's influence on the development of self-concept and identity, especially of culturally diverse adolescents, is significant. The student's need for belonging and acceptance is increased during the transition from childhood to adolescence. During this period, educators must recognize and assume responsibility not only for students' intellectual and educational growth, but also for their personal and social development. By providing appropriate middle level multicultural education experiences, students will develop the awareness, knowledge, and respect for people of culturally diverse backgrounds. Hopefully, all students will benefit from increased self-esteem and self-confidence.

The following strategies are recommended for the middle-level instructional program as related to goals of multicultural education:

- An interdisciplinary approach should be utilized to integrate multicultural education into the total school program.

- Curricular focuses should include the development of critical thinking skills.

- Materials, activities and experiences should be designed to promote students' understanding of culturally different others by focusing on both the cognitive and affective domains.

- Materials, activities, and experiences should be varied and multidimensional to maintain student's interest.

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- Cooperative learning groups and peer tutoring opportunities should be utilized. These small, heterogeneous, culturally diverse groups working together on learning tasks would engender feelings of success and bring about more positive attitudes toward culturally diverse others.
- A more intensive advisor/advisee, home-based guidance program will continue to provide positive role models.
- A mentor program should utilize people from the community with culturally different backgrounds.
- Teaching strategies should reflect the learning styles of students from diverse cultures.

Conclusion

The Syracuse City School District recognizes the uniqueness and richness of the diversity of backgrounds of all children in the city schools. In implementing the New York State Regent's goal of having all students develop the ability to understand, respect and accept cultural diversity, we feel that the time has come to make the educational environment a multicultural one. To meet the challenges of educating children for the 21st century, a multicultural education is essential. By infusing the curriculum with multicultural information, resources, strategies and activities, students can learn to accept and respect themselves and others as having dignity and worth. This in turn will seek to affirm the diversity that each child brings to the classroom. We, as educators, recognize the importance of making the classroom an exciting multicultural learning environment. When the curriculum reflects all groups, we send a message that we value all children and the cultures they represent. As a result of our research, we have come more firmly and agree wholeheartedly with James Banks:

"Students must attain cultural excellence in order to attain academic excellence."

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References

Banks, James A. Teaching Strategies for Ethnic Studies. Boston: Allynand Bacon, 1987.

Howard, Gary. "Multicultural Education in Action." Middle School Journal, September 1989.

Manning, M. Lee. "Multicultural Education." Middle School Journal, September 1989.

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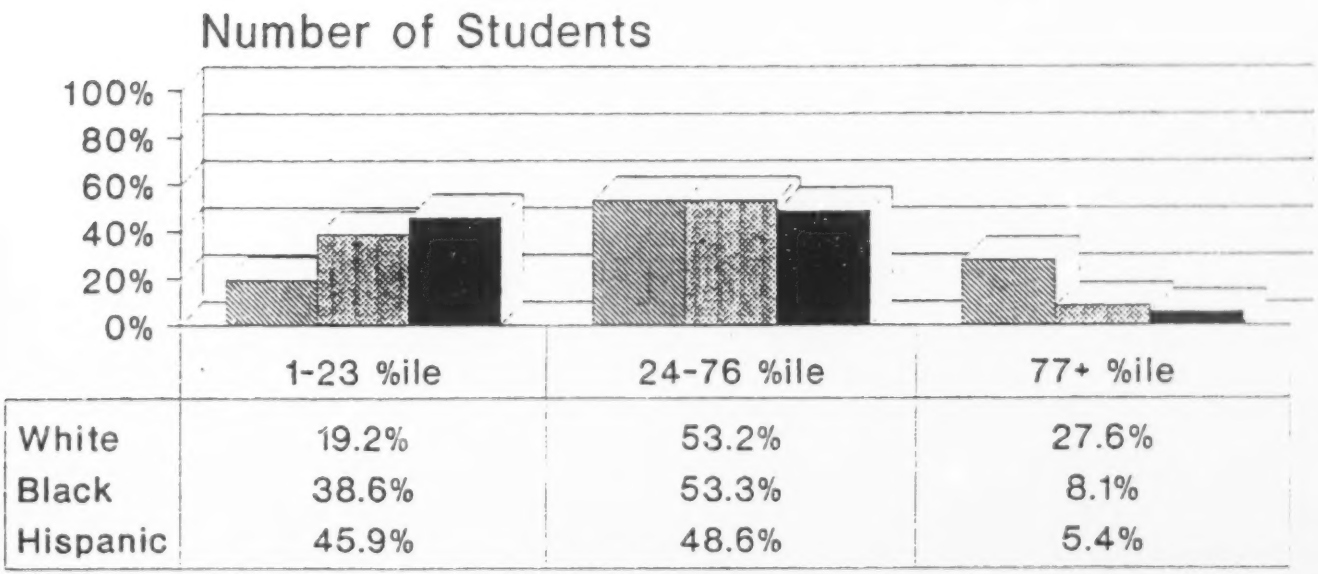
ATTACHMENT A

IOWA TEST SCORES - Math Achievement

Elementary School



	1-23 %ile	24-76 %ile	77+ %ile
White	19.2%	53.2%	27.6%
Black	38.6%	53.3%	8.1%
Hispanic	45.9%	48.6%	5.4%

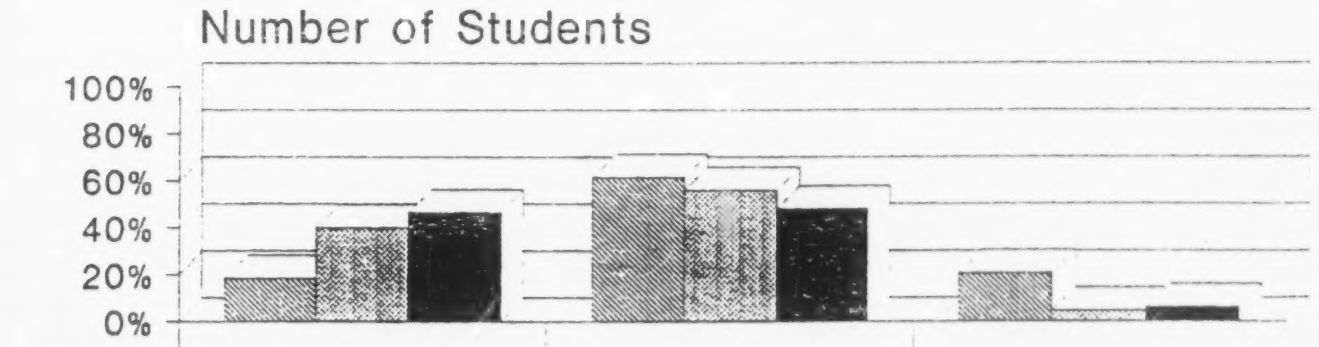
Rank

White Black Hispanic

School Year 1989-90

IOWA TEST SCORES - Math Achievement

Middle School



	1-23 %ile	24-76 %ile	77+ %ile
White	18.2%	61.4%	20.4%
Black	39.8%	55.8%	4.4%
Hispanic	46.3%	47.8%	6%

Rank

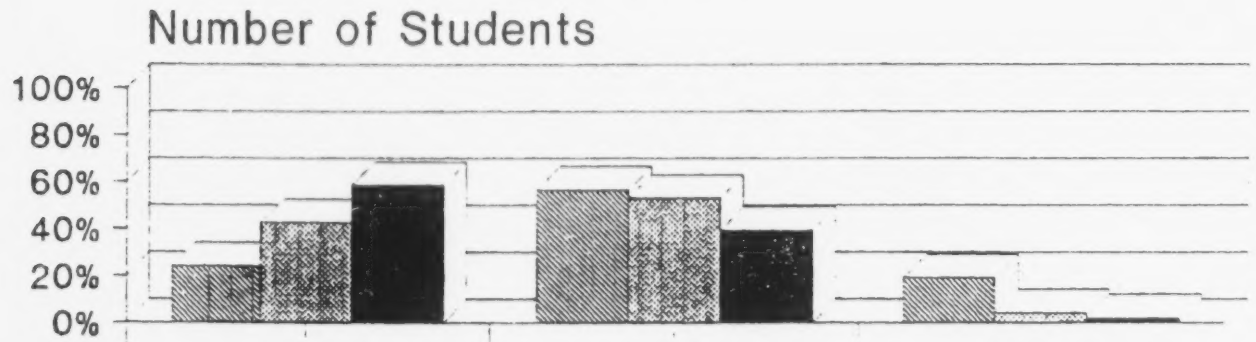
White Black Hispanic

School Year 1989-90

ATTACHMENT B

IOWA TEST SCORES - Reading Achievement

Elementary School



	1-23 %ile	24-76 %ile	77+ %ile
White	24.2%	56.6%	19.2%
Black	42.7%	53%	4.3%
Hispanic	58.6%	39.4%	2.1%

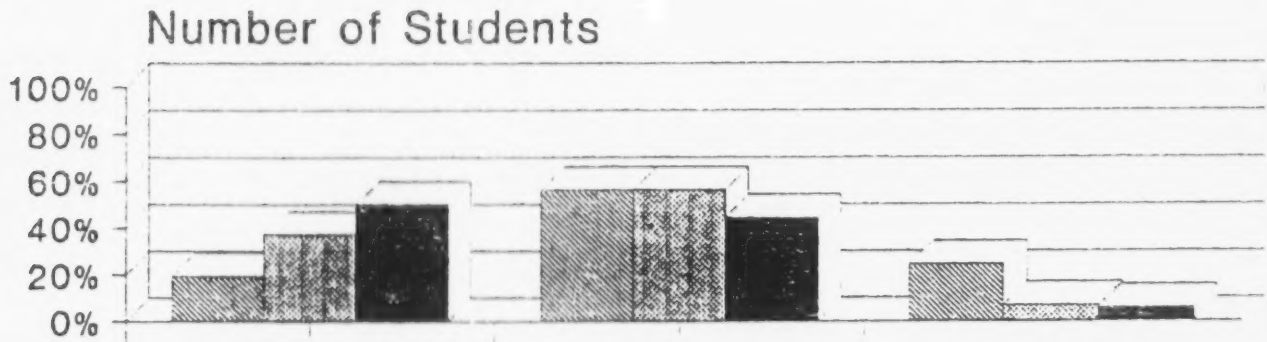
Rank

White Black Hispanic

School Year 1989-90

IOWA TEST SCORES - Reading Achievement

Middle School



	1-23 %ile	24-76 %ile	77+ %ile
White	19.4%	56.1%	24.5%
Black	37.1%	56.1%	6.8%
Hispanic	50%	44.3%	5.7%

Rank

White Black Hispanic

School Year 1989-90